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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, March 27, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THE PATTERNS FOR A WELL-BALANCED DIET." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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When you know by heart all the foods rich in proteins, minerals and vitamins, when you can recite the vitamin alphabet forward and back, how then to apply that learning to the job of feeding the family 3 squares a day?

Every menu-planner has many points to consider. The choice of foods, quality, quantity, cooking, serving -- all these, not to mention each individual's appetite at the moment, enter into his verdict on a meal. But choice of foods is most important of all. A "good square meal" deserves the name only when it is well-balanced. And good balance depends upon variety -- that is, selecting foods according to a pattern based on the chemical content of the foods, and their value to the human body.

This diet pattern is not narrow or limiting. It is simply a practical guide to scientific meal-planning. Within its outlines you have room for any number of choices and combinations, according to the resources and resourcefulness of the housekeepers, and with deference, likewise, to the average family appetite.

Following the balanced diet pattern amounts to this: Select each day some food or foods from each of the following 5 classes of common commodities: (1) Milk in some form; (2) vegetables and fruits; (3) meat, fish, poultry and eggs; (4) bread and cereals, and (5) fats and sugars.

The scientific basis of that pattern is this: The body must have the kinds of food it needs for its different purposes. Some kinds are needed to build bone, blood, muscle and the other body tissues, and some to keep the body in good condition. Still others are needed to supply the energy required to carry on the life processes within the body, and the day's activities, work or play.

Of course, what the body uses is not bread or meat or milk or any other food as such, but the chemical substances which compose these foods -- that is, proteins, minerals, and vitamins, carbohydrates and fats. The first 3 classes of food in the pattern -- milk, vegetables and fruits, and meat, fish, poultry and eggs -- are those we rely on chiefly for their proteins, minerals and vitamins, the substances needed for building and running the body. The other 2 classes -- the cereals and sugars (for carbohydrates) and the fats -- are the chief energy foods, though the cereals may also be good sources of protein and minerals. Nutritionists advise making sure of the first three classes, in the pattern, and then adding the others to fill your energy requirement.

Of course, all this is a brief statement of complicated facts. The different classes of foods overlap in food value because most foods contain at least a little of several essential food substances. But the proportions vary widely. A food that contains a great deal of protein may contain a very little carbohydrate, a food that is rich in vitamin A may furnish little or no vitamin C, and so on. For practical purposes, the variety pattern is worked out by using each class of foods for its chief food values, letting its other contributions count up as they will -- which will be all to the good for the diet as a whole. Begin, shall we say, with milk, and run through the list:

Milk furnishes more kinds of food value than any other one food. Milk is most important, however, for its calcium and phosphorus, its vitamins A and G, its high quality protein, and its fat. It contains very little iron, not much vitamin B, very little vitamin C, and very little carbohydrate. To get enough of those essential substances, you must look to other foods.

As for vegetables and fruits, they supply to large extent the minerals and vitamins not sufficient in milk, especially iron and vitamins B and C. Some of them also furnish calcium, phosphorus, vitamin A and vitamin G. They furnish protein, and also carbohydrates. But milk, vegetables and fruits combined do not furnish enough protein of the best quality, nor enough of certain minerals and vitamins, nor enough energy value.

Meat, fish, poultry and eggs are the chief protein foods, and some of them furnish iron. Meats such as liver and kidney, and certain fish, are good sources of vitamins A, B and D, as are eggs also, and all these foods furnish vitamin G. They also furnish fat. With milk, vegetables, fruits, and either meat, fish, poultry or eggs, the pattern still calls for energy foods.

Bread and cereals are the most important energy foods. All the grains are rich in carbohydrates, which are burned in the body for energy. They furnish some proteins, too, and whole-grain cereals and whole-grain flours are good sources of iron and vitamin B. But they are chiefly sources of energy.

Sugars or sirups also are energy foods, being concentrated carbohydrate.

Fats -- butter, margarine, bacon, salt pork, and the cooking or salad oils -- are useful chiefly as sources of energy.

A day's bill of fare on this pattern can be fitted to any schedule. The important thing is to include the variety of foods called for by the pattern -- in one day if practicable, but at least within two or three days. The number of choices within each class of foods, and the different ways of utilizing each article of food make possible an endless variety of menus providing all the essentials of a balanced diet.

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